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## THE PROPHETS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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There was a dreary interval in Jewish history, when it was commonly believed that prophecy was dead.<sup>1</sup> Even the Maccabean leaders, brave and capable as they were, seemed to their contemporaries to be merely filling a gap till a new order of prophets should arise; for that the prophetic age would return was not doubted by any devout Jew. Perhaps things never went so ill with the Jewish people as they supposed. During the two centuries before Christ a breath of prophetic inspiration passed from time to time over the dry bones of the nation, and there were stirrings of life which spoke of the presence of the Spirit. We feel it in the strenuous work of the Maccabees themselves, and in the zeal of the *Chasidim* and the earlier Pharisees, and it is perceptible in some at least of the literary products of the period—in Enoch<sup>2</sup> and the third book of the Sibyllines, in the Psalms of the Pharisees and the Wisdom of Solomon. The Christian era opens with a revival of formal prophecy at Jerusalem. The second gospel recognizes prophetic gifts in the priest Zacharias, in Simeon, in Hannah of the tribe of Asher.<sup>3</sup> As for John, the son of Zacharias, he was not only accounted a prophet by his own generation, but pronounced by our Lord to be something more—the prophet in whom the long succession of the Old Testament canon had reached its climax: “All the prophets and the law prophesied until John.”<sup>4</sup>

Prophecy in the Christian church began with the founder of the church. Jesus was regarded as a prophet by the crowds who hung upon his teaching both in Galilee and at Jerusalem; and the woman of Samaria, to whom he was at first no more than a Jew upon his travels, came to the same conclusion after his conversation with her.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 74:9; 1 Macc. 4:46; 9:27; 14:41.

<sup>2</sup> St. Jude's *ἐπροφήτευσεν* . . . *Ἐνώχ* is not without truth.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 1:67; 2:25, 36.      <sup>4</sup> Luke 1:76; Mark 11:32; Luke 7:26; Matt. 11:13.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 16:13 f.; 21:11; John 4:19.

Nor did our Lord hesitate to accept this account of his mission.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, he pledged himself to found a school of prophecy. The church was to possess, not only scribes,<sup>7</sup> teachers whose task it would be with competent learning to carry on and expound the Christian tradition, but "prophets" also, inspired teachers, through whom the voice of God would make itself heard again as in the days of the Old Covenant—men capable through the Spirit of guiding believers into new fields of life and thought; and these Christian prophets are classed with the prophets of the Old Testament as men who shared the same work and must expect to receive the same treatment at the hands of their own generation.<sup>8</sup> If we accept the testimony of the fourth gospel, Jesus provided for the fulfilment of this hope by his promise of another Paraclete. The office of the Spirit of Christ, as described in John 16:8 ff., is largely prophetic: "He will convict the world in respect of sin . . . He shall guide you into all the truth . . . He shall declare unto you the things that are to come . . . He shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you"—these energies of the Paraclete are all on the lines of Old Testament prophecy. The work of the Spirit will under the New Covenant be extended, magnified, even transfigured; but substantially it will be the same as of old.

Upon the coming of the Spirit-Paraclete, the church at once accepted her position as a prophetic body. The sons and daughters of the new Israel, even their bondmen and bondmaidens, were called, as Peter gathered from the prophecy of Joel, to join the goodly fellowship of the prophets.<sup>9</sup> But in the Christian as in the Jewish church the prophetic spirit, which belonged potentially to the whole community, found expression chiefly in the words of individuals charged with special gifts. Peter's own speeches, as reported in Acts, chaps. 2-4, rise in places to an elevation which, under the circumstances, suggests prophetic power. Of the seven, two at least—Stephen and Philip—spoke and acted as men who were moved by the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup> But the first definite reference to Christian prophets occurs in Acts 11:27. It must have been shortly before the famine in the time of Claudius, about 45 A. D., that a band of prophets went down from

<sup>6</sup> Mark 6:4; Luke 11:49.    <sup>8</sup> Matt. 23:34; Luke 11:49.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 13:52.

<sup>9</sup> Joel 2:28 f.; Acts 2:8.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 6:5, 8; 7:29, 39.

Jerusalem to visit the church which was then rising at Antioch under the hands of Saul and Barnabas. A year or two afterward we find "prophets and teachers" ministering to the Lord in the church at Antioch, and among the five who are mentioned appear the names of Saul and Barnabas.<sup>11</sup> Later again, after the council at Jerusalem, the mother-church strengthened the hands of Barnabas and Saul at a critical moment by sending with them to Antioch Judas Barsabbas and Silas, "themselves also prophets."<sup>12</sup> Seven years after this, the four daughters of Philip the evangelist are found exercising prophetic gifts at Cæsarea,<sup>13</sup> and on the same occasion a prophet comes down from Judea to the seacoast and predicts Paul's coming captivity; his name is Agabus, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that he is the Agabus who in 45 A. D. predicted the Claudian famine.<sup>14</sup> These are all the references to Christian prophecy in the Acts, if we except the cases in which spiritual gifts were conveyed through the laying on of an apostle's hands;<sup>15</sup> but such transient manifestations of the Spirit probably did not constitute a claim to rank among the prophets of the church.

From what has been said it appears that the movement began in the mother-church at Jerusalem, whence came the earliest and perhaps all of the Christian prophets mentioned in the Acts. From Jerusalem the new prophecy made its way to Antioch, and from Antioch it was carried westward by Saul, and possibly in some measure also by Barnabas and the other prophet missionaries named in Acts, chap. 13. The epistles of Paul supply our chief materials for an account of Christian prophecy, as it existed in the Pauline churches of the first century. In his earliest letter the church at Thessalonica is warned not to quench the Spirit by making light of prophesying, as men of Greek origin were perhaps specially tempted to do; the fire of the Spirit may have burned low and dull in the local prophets, who were but recently reclaimed from heathenism, but it would be ill for the church if she thought scornfully of a divine gift because of the human imperfection which accompanied it.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Acts 13:1 ff. Ramsay's suggestion (*St. Paul*, p. 65) that "the variation between the connecting particles *καί* and *τε* marks a distinction between these prophets, Barnabas, Symeon, and Lucius, and two teachers, Manaen and Saul," appears to us to be hypercritical and unnecessary.

<sup>12</sup> Acts 15:32.

<sup>14</sup> Acts, chap. 21; cf. 11:28.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 21:8.

<sup>15</sup> Acts 8:16; 19:6.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Thess. 5:20.

From the next group of letters we learn more. There were prophets at Rome, it seems, before Paul had set foot in this city; possibly they had come direct from the mother-church. In any case, Paul, when writing to the Roman church, is careful not to overlook prophecy as an element in Christian life; it is one of the *charismata* which the Spirit distributes to the members of Christ as he will, and which they must use, if they have received it, as their spiritual capacity permits.<sup>17</sup> But it is to the first epistle to the Corinthians that we owe most of our knowledge of the conditions under which the gift of prophecy was exercised in the first days. Circumstances called for a full discussion of the place which the *charismata* held in the life of the Corinthian church, and a whole section of the epistle (12:1—14:40) is devoted to the subject. The apostle strives to guard against too high an estimate of any spiritual gift, but at the same time among spiritual gifts he claims the highest place for prophecy. The Corinthians made too much of spiritual gifts in general, but more especially of such gifts as powers of healing, and *glossolalia*; like the Thessalonians, they were evidently disposed to make light of "prophesyings," in comparison with these more showy endowments. Paul meets this tendency by assigning to prophecy the first place among the *charismata*. Prophets take rank next after apostles, before ordinary teachers, before workers of miracles or speakers with "tongues," before persons endowed with gifts of administration and government.<sup>18</sup> Reasons are given for this judgment which disclose the scope and methods of Christian prophecy. The prophet, considered in his ideal condition, "knows all mysteries and all knowledge."<sup>19</sup> When he prophesies, his words are for the building up of the faithful, the strengthening of the weak, or the comforting of the distressed;<sup>20</sup> when he prays or offers the eucharistic thanksgiving in the congregation, his spirit and his understanding are both engaged, and even the *idiotae*—those members of the church who possess no special gifts—can follow and respond

<sup>17</sup> Rom. 12:6, κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως; cf. 12:3, ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἐμέρισεν μέτρον πίστεως.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Cor. 12:28; cf. Eph. 4:20; 3:5; 4:21; in the last passage even the evangelist, i. e., the Christian who carries his faith into new regions, the pioneer of a nascent Christianity, is subordinated to the prophet.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor. 13:1.      <sup>20</sup> 1 Cor. 14:3, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ παράκλησιν καὶ παραμυθίαν.

with a hearty "Amen;"<sup>21</sup> when he teaches, he informs and instructs his hearers.<sup>22</sup> Thus in all his ministrations the Christian prophet appeals to what is highest and best in man, and the practical benefit which the church receives from prophecy is proportionally great. To believers it is a sure sign of the divine presence and working; to unbelievers it may be the means of awakening and conversion. The apostle in his zeal imagines a whole congregation seized with the divine *afflatus*, and each believer prophesying in his turn—"would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!"<sup>23</sup> and he sees the heathen, who flocked in to listen, mown down by the sharp, two-edged sword of the word in the hands of the prophetic church.

From this passage it is clear that the Christian prophet took an important part in the conduct of the primitive assemblies; whether he was an officer of the church or not, no restrictions were laid upon the exercise of his gift beyond those which decency and good order might impose. At Corinth there was need of some repression, for the assemblies had become the scene, not only of confusion, but of unseemly rivalry and self-display; when the church met on the first day of the week, nearly every member was eager to present a contribution to the spiritual *eranos*, whether it was a psalm, or an instruction, or a "tongue," or its interpretation, or an apocalyptic vision.<sup>24</sup> It was therefore necessary to lay down certain rules for the conduct of the weekly gathering, and those which relate to prophecy concern us here. They are simple enough: "Let no more than two or three prophets be heard at the same assembly, and let only one speak at a time. If, while a prophet is still speaking, a second should rise in the body of the assembly, and say, 'A revelation has just been made to me,' the first is to desist; and the second in like manner may be called upon to give place to a third." In the working out of this scheme certain safeguards were necessary, and Paul is careful to provide them. The rule which limits the number of speakers on any one occasion is not to be taken as prohibiting the free exercise of prophetic gifts by any member of the church; "ye all

<sup>21</sup> 1 Cor. 14:15.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Cor. 14:19, *ὅνα καὶ ἄλλους κατηχήσω*.

<sup>23</sup> Numb. 11:29. The picture drawn in 1 Cor. 14:24 is of course ideal only. Even at Corinth but a portion of the members of the church possessed prophetic powers; see 1 Cor. 12:29, *μὴ πάντες προφῆται*;

<sup>24</sup> 1 Cor. 14:26.

can prophesy one by one;"<sup>25</sup> i. e., no monopoly is to be enjoyed in this matter by prominent or popular members; all who claim to be prophets are to be allowed a hearing in due course. On the other hand, the congregation is protected against impostors or enthusiasts by being invested with authority to judge of what is said; "let the others discern,"<sup>26</sup> the apostle adds. It was the privilege of the audience to use their critical faculty, refusing what common-sense or Christian intuition condemned, and even in the case of a true prophecy discriminating between the human element and the divine.<sup>27</sup>

In the Pastoral Epistles the Christian prophets come into sight in one connection only, and in reference to an incident which belongs to an early stage in their history. When, after separating from Barnabas, Paul, now on his way with Silas to new scenes of apostolic work, visited the churches which he had founded in Lycaonia, he chose Timothy for a second colleague, on the recommendation of the local congregations, as the Acts inform us.<sup>28</sup> From 1 Timothy (1:18; 4:14) we gather that the recommendation was voiced in fact by the prophets, who pointed out Timothy as worthy of the office, and were present when he received the laying on of hands from the presbytery. As in Paul's own case, the formal separation of Timothy for this work to which he was called was made by the officers of the church; but the call came from the Spirit through the prophets. It is a crucial instance of the far-reaching influence exercised by this non-official, but highly important, class of men from the first days of their appearance in the church.

The prophets of Paul's time have left no literary remains;<sup>29</sup> if their work was of permanent value, the form was ephemeral. One prophetic writing holds a place in the New Testament, but in its present shape, at least, it seems clearly to belong to the last decade

<sup>25</sup> 1 Cor. 14:31.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Cor. 14:29; cf. 1 Thess. 5:21.

<sup>27</sup> It is noteworthy that the *Didaché* expressly abandons this right (§11: πάντα προφήτην λαλοῦντα ἐν πνεύματι οὐ πειράσσετε οὐδὲ διακρινεῖτε, "Ye shall not test or judge any prophet speaking in the Spirit"), falling back on the test proposed in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:16).

<sup>28</sup> Acts 16:1 ff., ἐμαρτυρεῖτο ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν Λύστροις καὶ Ἰκονίῳ ἀδελφῶν. See Hort, *Ecclesia*, pp. 18 ff., for the identification of this occasion with that referred to in 1 Tim. 1:4.

<sup>29</sup> Unless we may claim for them the fragment of a Christian hymn in Eph. 5:4, or the "faithful sayings" of the Pastoral Epistles.

of the century, and, if so, it is divided from the latest epistle of Paul by some thirty years. "The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ," which "he sent and signified by his angel unto his servant John," repeatedly claimed to be a prophecy,<sup>30</sup> i. e., a book written by a Christian prophet with a prophetic purpose.

Paul, indeed, distinguishes "revelation" (*apocalypsis*) from "prophecy," but only as he distinguishes "knowledge" and "teaching" from "prophecy,"<sup>31</sup> though knowledge and the gift of teaching are not in themselves equivalent to "prophecy," yet the ideal prophet possesses and uses both, and similarly he possesses and uses the gift of apccalypse. Prophecy need not be apocalyptic, but it may be, and often is, such; and, as a matter of fact, the prophesyings of the apostolic age were doubtless to a great extent apocalyptic. Such certainly is the one surviving Christian prophecy of the time; though there are not wanting in the book other elements of prophetic energy—exhortations, consolation, conviction—the revelation of the invisible and the future largely predominates.

In the book of Revelation we read much, as it is natural that we should, about the Christian prophets. From the writer's point of view, they are the most prominent members of the Asian churches. Unless we adopt the improbable conjecture that the Angels of the Seven Churches represent the rising monarchical episcopate, the Apocalypse contains no reference to local church officers. It is impossible that the Pauline churches of Asia can have been without a presbyterate; it is nearly certain that by 95 A. D. the episcopate had begun to show itself in some of them. But these officials are ignored by the prophet-author; with pardonable short-sightedness, he overlooks all but the charismatic ministry. From his point of view the church in every Asian city consists of two orders, the prophets and the saints, "in mystical language the Spirit and the Bride;"<sup>32</sup> once we read of "Saints, Apostles, and Prophets,"<sup>33</sup> but never of "the Saints with the Bishops and Deacons."<sup>34</sup> In one famous passage the whole church is represented by two witnesses who prophesy, and are styled "the two prophets."<sup>35</sup> To prophesy is the church's *raison*

<sup>30</sup> Rev. 1:3; 10:11; 22:7, 10, 18 f.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Cor. 14:6, ἡ ἐν ἀποκαλύψει ἢ ἐν γνώσει, ἡ ἐν προφητείᾳ, ἡ ἐν διδασκῇ.

<sup>32</sup> Rev. 11:18; 16:6; 18:24; 22:9, 17.

<sup>34</sup> Phil. 1:1.

<sup>33</sup> Rev. 18:20.

<sup>35</sup> Rev. 11:3, 10.



*d'être*; the "witness of peace" and the "Spirit of prophecy" are practically identified.<sup>36</sup> Evidently the writer of the Apocalypse fully reciprocated Paul's sense of the high importance of Christian prophecy, if he did not even go farther. Although with Paul he would have confessed that prophecy is in its nature partial, and therefore one of the things which shall be done away when that which is perfect is come,<sup>37</sup> we cannot conceive of the apocalypticist as entertaining a suspicion that it would in fact be "done away" within a century from his own time, or even before the coming of the Lord. The prophets of the Asian churches had attained a solidarity unknown to the prophets of Paul's generation; as we see them in the Apocalypse, they are an order, almost a *clerus*, eclipsing the local ministry, and bound together by an unmistakable *esprit de corps*. If John the apocalypticist is John the apostle, he never insists on the fact; he does, indeed, claim for the apostolate a permanent place in the economy of the church,<sup>38</sup> but he is content to take rank among the prophets, with whom the destinies of the church seem to him to be durably linked.

We are now in a position to glean from the New Testament a first-hand impression of the Christian prophet, as he was known to the church of the apostolic age. There could have been few churches in which he was not a familiar figure during the second half of the first century. From Jerusalem the new prophecy had traveled to Antioch, and from Antioch to Asia Minor and Greece; to Rome it had gone perhaps straight from the mother-church, and it was there before Paul. When it reached a church, the gift probably showed itself, as at Corinth, in a sudden impulse which seized members of the society as they sat in the assembly; a Christian who was touched by the divine afflatus would feel himself constrained to rise and address his brethren, and if his word struck home, and the experience was repeated, he would come to be recognized as a "prophet." His rôle would be distinct from that of the ordinary church teacher. The teacher delivered to the congregation what he had received from an apostle or an evangelist, or had gathered for himself out of the Old Testament; he was the vehicle of the Christian traditions, which in

<sup>36</sup> Rev. 19:10.

<sup>37</sup> 1 Cor. 13:8 f.

<sup>38</sup> Rev. 21:14.

the next century was crystallized into symbolical forms. The prophet might or might not be a teacher; but, *qua* prophet, he spoke as the direct organ of the Holy Spirit, expounding, and at times revealing, the divine will. On occasions he might be moved to declare the will of God with regard to individuals, as was done in the case of Saul, and again in the case of Timothy; or to foresee events in the near future, like Agabus; or even to take a far-reaching view of the destinies of the world and the church, as it was given to the author of the Apocalypse to do. But more usually the prophet was simply the inspired preacher of righteousness, who spoke with a power which carried conviction to believers and unbelievers alike; when he addressed them, men felt that God was present and at work in their consciences. But whatever the direction that prophecy took, its immediate dependence on the Spirit gave it a first-rate importance. The prophet belonged to the primary teachers of the faith; together with the apostles, and subordinate to the apostle only, he took his place among the foundation stones on which was to be raised the great superstructure of the future church;<sup>39</sup> with the apostle, he was in a manner the common property of the whole church, and not simply a private member of the community where he lived. Hence the first prophets, like the apostles, were more or less itinerant, as we learn from the Acts. How far this practice was continued in the Pauline churches there is nothing to show, but we meet it again in the *Didaché*, where the prophets are an itinerating body, and do not settle down except on the invitation of the local churches which they visit. Prophets when settled, however, were, if found worthy, highly honored; "they are your high-priests," says the *Didaché*, quite in the spirit of Paul's and John's appreciation of the order.

But the new prophecy, even within the period covered by the New Testament, was not without its dangers and premonitions of decay. Some of these are already revealed in the first epistle to the Corinthians; the indiscriminate exercise of the gift at Corinth had led to confusion, if to nothing worse. It was necessary to remind the church that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets;" i. e., that it rested with the prophet himself to make a right use of his gift. If he neglected to exercise a wide self-restraint,

<sup>39</sup> Eph. 2:21.

inspiration might degenerate into fanaticism, and the mind become the victim of its own excited thoughts; and mere soothsaying—*manteia*, and not true *propheteia*—would be the result. So long, indeed, as there existed, side by side with prophecy, the corresponding gift of “discernings of spirits,”<sup>40</sup> not much harm could come to the church from the vaporings of unwise prophets; but when Christian discernment had lost the edge of its first vigilance, serious evils might arise from this cause, as the history of Montanism amply demonstrates. In apostolic times a more immediate danger was created by spurious prophecy. Of the coming of the pseudo-prophet the Master had given no uncertain warning; he saw that a revival of prophecy must bring with it a recrudescence of the base imitations which had dogged the steps of the prophets of Israel.<sup>41</sup> The later books of the New Testament bear witness to the fulfilment of his anticipation. Paul’s words, “Abstain from every form of evil,”<sup>42</sup> when read in connection with their context, show that this danger was imminent when he wrote the first of his epistles. In John’s later years it had already come: “Believe not every spirit,” he writes, “but prove the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”<sup>43</sup> At Thyatira there was a “Jezebel” within the church, propagating Nicolaitan laxity of life with the authority which belonged to one who gave herself out to be a prophetess.<sup>44</sup> The writer of Second Peter, who, if not the apostle Peter, assumes the standpoint of the apostle, draws a parallel between the false prophets of Israel, and the false teachers who will presently arise within the church and “privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them.” He refers, as it seems, to the two worst features of primitive heresy, immorality and christological error. To lower the standard of Christian purity, and at the same time undermine the church’s faith in the reality of the incarnation, would, indeed, be a masterpiece of Antichrist, and all the more disastrous if it were brought about by prophets who professed to be moved by the Spirit of Christ.

Notwithstanding these dangers, prophecy held its ground in the Christian church to the end of the century, and no withdrawal of

<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:29.

<sup>42</sup> 1 Thess. 5:22.

<sup>41</sup> Matt. 7:15; 24:11, 24.

<sup>43</sup> 1 John 4:1.

<sup>44</sup> Rev. 2:20.

the Spirit of prophecy seemed then to be at hand; indeed, the Apocalypse, as we have seen, represents the prophetic order as supreme in the affairs of the churches of Asia as late as the end of the reign of Domitian. Yet by that time the seed of its decline must have been already sown. Even in the remote church whose condition is reflected in the *Didaché* the local ministry has begun to assert its claims to rank as high as the charismatic orders;<sup>45</sup> abuses of prophetic gifts were more numerous and flagrant; and the worthier prophets had shown a tendency to settle down—an arrangement which could not fail ultimately to transform them into local office-bearers. In Asia the rise of the episcopate must have meant the decline of the prophetic order; for there was plainly no room in a single community for both bishop and prophet, unless the two characters were sustained by the same person, which may sometimes have happened. From these and other causes, prophecy declined so rapidly after the death of John that it was practically extinct, except in Montanistic circles, by the end of the second century. Montanism, which aimed at resuscitating the prophetic gift, dealt the death-blow; for how could any upholder of the catholic episcopate claim a power which the Phrygian sect had converted into a symbol of rebellion against the constituted authorities of the church? <sup>46</sup>

The question forces itself upon the mind whether, together with the name of prophets and the formal use of prophesying, the church has lost the essence of the divine gift. It may be urged, in support of this view, that apostles and prophets, from the nature of their work, belonged exclusively to the first age of the church; and that, as soon as the church acquired a regular ministry and a definite rule of faith, the *charismata* were no longer necessary to her well-being, and presently died away, as seed-leaves die at the base of a plant-stem which has begun to put forth ordinary foliage. And this is doubtless true of the forms which prophecy assumed in the primi-

<sup>45</sup> *Did.*, 15.

<sup>46</sup> The church herself did not at once resign herself to the loss of prophecy; cf. Apollinarius *ap.* Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 5:17, δὲν γὰρ εἶναι τὸ προφητικὸν χάρισμα ἐν πάσῃ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ μέχρι τῆς τελείας παρουσίας ὁ ἀπόστολος ἀξιοῖ. But the exigencies of controversy, added to the growing officialism of the church, succeeded in silencing this conviction, and the church ceased to prophesy, leaving Montanism in possession of a claim which rightly belonged to the church.

tive church, and which were products of the immaturity of the first age. The scenes which attended the exercise of the gift at Corinth in Paul's day, and even the more orderly methods prescribed by the apostle, are intolerable to the modern sense of what is due to the dignity of public worship. Nor could the church of this age brook the interference of an unknown itinerant, perhaps not an officer of its own commission or of any other recognized Christian body, in the official duties of the local ministry; nor, again, could designation to high office be left to an irresponsible voice raised in the congregation, and representing itself as the organ of the Holy Spirit. No one desires to recall these features of primitive Christian prophecy. They would be as incongruous as archaic revivals usually are, and mischievous in a high degree. No one whose judgment deserves consideration wishes even to restore the title of "prophet" or the use of "prophesying."

But the energy of the Holy Spirit is not tied to primitive methods and names, or to those of any one age or generation. In the things of the Spirit, as in other spheres, principles remain unchanged, while the *modus operandi* varies. The essence of Christian prophecy consists, according to the one prophet of the New Testament canon, in "the testimony of Jesus;"<sup>47</sup> i. e., the witness which he bears to the church, and which the church repeats to the world. In proportion as this witness is borne clearly and convincingly by the Christian society in any age, that age possesses and exercises, according to its own capacities, the prophetic gift. The same is true of individual Christians. While every loyal disciple, according to his measure, bears witness to the Master, this witness in some lives rises to the level of actual prophecy, though it is no longer called by that name. Few who read these words will not have met with some man or woman who has manifested the best qualities of the ancient prophet in his depths of personal conviction, his power of speaking straight to the hearts of men, his grasp on the things of the Spirit, his faculty for reading character and interpreting experiences, his moments of insight into the unseen or of outlook into the future.

Our modern prophets are to be found in every class of life,

<sup>47</sup> Rev. 19:10; cf. John 16:1 ff.

among laymen as well as within the ranks of the clergy, among the simple and uneducated as well as among men of culture and marked natural powers. The same Spirit works in all, though his gifts take shape and color from the materials on which he operates, and are molded by the surroundings in which they are cast. If we had to select two manifestations of the prophetic Spirit which are specially characteristic of our own time, we might find them in the increased spiritual power exerted by the modern pulpit, and the high tone of much of the Christian literature which issues from the modern press. Perhaps we can point to no modern Chrysostom or Augustine, no Bernard of Clairvaux or Thomas à Kempis, no Savonarola, no Whitefield or Wesley; but has any age since the first yielded so great a harvest of Christian teaching marked by the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power"? This result cannot be attributed altogether to the spread of education, or even of religious knowledge. Mere knowledge in spiritual things is not power, and power may even exist in a high degree where knowledge is scanty. The story of our most recent religious awakening has shown that great spiritual effects can be obtained without any great educational advantages or a striking personality. Such movements as the Welsh revival of 1904-5 recall even some of the external conditions of the primitive prophesyings; but imperfections of this nature may be forgiven when by common consent the fruits show that the Spirit of God has been at work. The churches of the twentieth century will have gained more than we can say, if they are roused to that full sense of a divine presence and co-operation which was the strength of the early Christian societies. If in these days we do not need a new order of prophets or a new apocalypse, we have certainly not outgrown the want of a fresh illapse of spiritual power on those who teach and those who learn. It is in this direction that we may look for new developments of Christian prophecy.